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Baker-Polito Administration Awards Over \$700,000 in Grants to Local Food Ventures

Grant Program Aims to Increase Access to Fresh Food, Create Jobs in Low- and Moderate-Income Communities

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BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced that the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) has awarded \$700,000 to four agricultural groups through the Massachusetts Food Ventures Program (MFVP), a grant program intended to address food access and expansion of economic opportunities through new food ventures and enterprises throughout the state. The announcement was made by Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito during a visit to World Farmers in Lancaster.

"Our administration is committed to providing opportunities for everyone to have access to fresh and healthy foods," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "The Massachusetts Food Ventures Program is an important tool for providing healthy foods, reducing food insecurity, and improving economic opportunities for low and moderate-income communities."

"Massachusetts' community-based agricultural enterprises drive economic growth and provide opportunities for local job creation and entrepreneurship," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "By providing these ventures with financial assistance, the Commonwealth helps farms and agricultural businesses thrive and ensure underserved communities have access to healthy, Massachusetts-grown products."

The MFVP, part of the 2014 Environmental Bond Bill and funded for the first time in the 2017 Capital Plan, provides financial support to food ventures sited primarily in or near communities of low- or moderate-income, including Gateway Cities and rural communities. With expanded investment, completed projects will improve access to Massachusetts-grown, harvested or caught food products through the development of collaborations with local agricultural enterprises and private/public entities. The program also helps implement the goals of the [Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan](#).

"The Baker-Polito Administration continues to support local farmers and is dedicated to making nutritious, affordable food available to all of the Commonwealth's residents, especially children," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. "The grants awarded today ensure strategic investments in infrastructure for local agricultural businesses such as commercial kitchens, greenhouses, farmers markets and food truck commissaries."

Funded projects include new construction that will create temporary and full-time employment, as well as create facilities that will foster job creation and expansion of food access and distribution in low- to moderate-income areas.

"The Massachusetts Food Ventures Program strengthens our shared food infrastructure, which is a critical component in addressing food insecurity in the Commonwealth. It has the added benefit of stimulating the economy and creating jobs," **said MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux**. "Additionally, our farmers benefit from the ability to extend their season and expand their markets through value-added products. We're pleased to once again offer this important funding to support the growth and development of Massachusetts agriculture."

Key areas for investment for the MFVP are food processing infrastructure to meet the needs of the expanding local food system; improved distribution systems to support opportunities for equitable access to fresh local food; and retail outlet strategies that enhance access to healthy food.

The following groups received grants:

UTEC, Inc., Lowell – \$75,506

This grant will allow UTEC to invest in specialized equipment and infrastructure improvements in their new 5,000 square foot full-service commercial kitchen. It will expand their contract manufacturing enterprise to support local food producers and entrepreneurs who need a nearby, affordable certified kitchen facility for small scale processing and preparation.

Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation, Roxbury – \$250,000

The grant will support Nuestra Comunidad's development of a community grocery store in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. The funding will be used for the purchase of grocery store equipment. The project creates a retail outlet which will increase equitable access to fresh healthy foods, through collaborative partnerships with local growers and manufacturers.

The Livestock Institute of Southern New England, Westport – \$250,000

The grant will be applied to the construction costs for the state-of-the-art slaughter house and process facility. This facility's mission is to revitalize and strengthen livestock farming in Southeastern Massachusetts. The project will also

teach Massachusetts residents safe and humane handling and slaughtering techniques as well as provide job training for butchering.

World Farmers, Lancaster – \$124,699

This grant will support the renovation of a commercial community kitchen, providing the infrastructure needed for incubator businesses and local food entrepreneurs. The project will enable nearly 250 immigrant and refugee farmers at the organization's farm to produce value-added products as well as provide commercial kitchen space to local businesses and new food businesses.

"I couldn't be more proud of World Farmers," said **State Representative Harold Naughton (D-Clinton)**. "This funding is instrumental towards World Farmers' mission assisting small farmers, rural communities and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in reaching sustainable, culturally relevant agriculture. The renovation of a large community-based kitchen is the perfect model of what the Massachusetts Local Food Action plan strives for, this kitchen will provide access to healthy, affordable and locally sourced produce."

MDAR's goals have been to increase and sustain the capacity of local food producers and enterprises to provide tangible, measurable benefits to residents in low-moderate income communities which include increased access to healthy, Massachusetts-produced foods, entrepreneurial opportunities, and economic enhancement.

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